

The Moores School Concert Chorale is the University of Houston's premiere large choral ensemble. The group has been under the direction of Betsy Cook Weber since 2002. Since that time the group has appeared as an invited choir before the 2004 national convention of the American Musicological Society, the 2005 and 2008 Texas Educators Association conventions, and the 2007 American Choral Directors Association national convention in Miami. Chorale members traveled to compete at the Eisteddfod in Llangollen, Wales, in 2009, and won or placed in every category in which they entered, including First Prize in the category of Chamber Choir. In 2011, Weber and the chorale ventured to Tours, France, for the Florilege Vocal de Tours. In 2013, the group received first prize and the award for best interpretation of a religious work at the International Chamber Choir Competition in Marktobendorf, Germany. And in 2015, the Concert Chorale competed in the Grand Prix of Nations in Magdeburg, Germany, during which it won the World Championship in the Youth Choir category, along with gold awards in several categories including pop, jazz, youth choir and folk.

The goal of the Moores School of Music is to prepare singers who are strong musicians possessed of a secure vocal technique that will enable them to succeed wherever vocal opportunity presents itself. Because of the school's enviable location in one of the country's most active musical and cultural centers, these students are active as paid soloists, section leaders, and directors of church choirs, and they often teach voice privately in the public schools. When schedules permit, they may be seen singing with the Mercury Baroque, Cantare, the Houston Symphony Chorus, and the Houston Chamber Choir.

The Moores School of Music is one of the premier music schools in America. Offering bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, it serves approximately 600 students annually. Areas of study include composition, conducting, performance, theory and musicology. Its faculty consists of internationally recognized performers, composers and scholars. Among its ensembles are the Moores School Symphony Orchestra, Moores Jazz Ensemble, Moores Opera Center, Concert Chorale, Concert Women's Chorus, Spirit of Houston Cougar Marching Band, Wind Ensemble and Percussion Ensemble. A majority of the school's concerts are performed in the 800-seat Moores Opera House. For more details on the Moores School of Music, visit <http://www.music.uh.edu/>.

Betsy Cook Weber is Professor of Music and Director of Choral Studies at the University of Houston's Moores School of Music. She teaches a full load of coursework at the undergraduate and graduate levels, oversees the large and varied choral area at the Moores School, and is also active internationally as a conductor, clinician, adjudicator, and lecturer. Before coming to the University of Houston, Weber taught vocal music, K-12, in the public schools. Comments about her choral work include "de luxe singing, eliciting admiration and gratitude," "wonderfully elegant and humorous," "sophisticated choir – expertly prepared and with a finely-tuned corporate ear."

She has prepared singers for Da Camera, for early music orchestras Ars Lyrica and Mercury Houston, and is also routinely called upon to prepare singers for touring shows, including Josh Groban, NBC's Clash of the Choirs, Telemundo's Latin Grammy's, Star Wars in Concert, and Andrea Bocelli. In the fall of 2014, Weber became director of the Houston Symphony Chorus. She served from 1990 - 1997 as Assistant and, later, Associate Director of this historic ensemble, helping prepare major works for renowned conductors including Robert Shaw, Christoph Eschenbach, Roger Wagner, Nicholas McKegan, and Christopher Seaman. Weber is the 13th person and 1st woman to receive the Texas Choral Director Association's coveted Texas Choirmaster Award and is editor of the Betsy Cook Weber choral series with Alliance Music Publishing. She holds degrees from the University of North Texas, Westminster Choir College (Princeton, NJ), and the University of Houston.



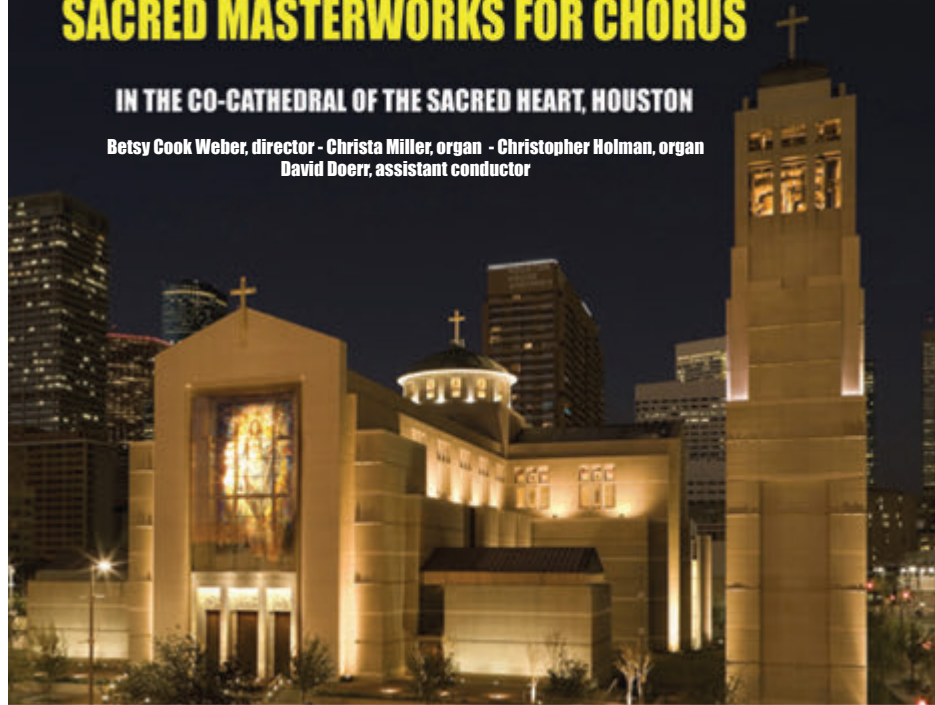
The Moores School Concert Chorale, University Of Houston

presents

CATHEDRAL VOICES SACRED MASTERWORKS FOR CHORUS

IN THE CO-CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART, HOUSTON

**Betsy Cook Weber, director - Christa Miller, organ - Christopher Holman, organ
David Doerr, assistant conductor**



Frank Martin (1890–1974) was born in Geneva, Switzerland, the son of a Calvinist pastor, and by the age of eight he had started composing music. At age twelve he heard a performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, an experience which left an indelible impression on the budding musician.

Following his father's wishes, he eventually entered the University of Geneva to study mathematics and physics, but soon decided instead that he was going to devote himself entirely to his music. His unique style draws on a wide variety of influences, including Renaissance music, French Impressionism and Schoenberg's twelve-tone system, but above all, Johann Sebastian Bach.

The first four movements of the *Mass for Double Choir* were completed in 1922, the *Agnus Dei* being added four years later; however, Martin did not allow the work to be performed until 1963. After its premiere he explained why it had remained unseen and unheard for all those years: "I considered it to be a matter between God and myself. I felt that a personal expression of religious belief should remain secret and hidden from public opinion."

Martin's *Mass* is notable for its flowing rhythmic and melodic vitality – always at the service of the words – and the juxtaposition of austere, restrained music with rich harmonic writing of considerable passion and great beauty. The influence of Gregorian chant is never far away, not least at the very opening *Kyrie*, where a simple, flowing alto line gradually unfolds, soon to be taken up by the sopranos and then supported by the full choirs. The *Gloria* begins calmly, with accumulating chords proclaiming *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, leading into an energetic *Quoniam* and ending with a quiet *Cum sancto*. The *Credo* opens with strong, affirmative statements ("I believe!") from each choir. After a quietly mystic *Et incarnatus est* comes the *Et resurrexit* in the form of an exuberant canon.

In this performance, between the *Credo* and *Sanctus*, a brief organ improvisation by Charles Tournemire, *Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu* (The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus) is interpolated in the place of the *Offertory* in the liturgy.

In the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, gently undulating chords from the tenors and basses support an eloquent, falling phrase from the sopranos. The climax of the movement, and one of the most powerful moments in the *Mass*, is the section from *Pleni sunt coeli* through to the final, ecstatic *Osanna*, with the sopranos singing their stratospheric line *fff*. The separation between the two choirs is most evident in the *Agnus Dei*, which Martin added to the *Mass* in 1926. The second choir provides a steady rhythmic foundation over which the first choir, mostly in unison, sings a plainsong-like melodic line, echoing the music of the opening *Kyrie*. The work reaches its peaceful conclusion with the two choirs combining for the final, serene *Dona nobis pacem* – "Grant us peace".

Ave verum corpus is a Eucharistic motet by the English Renaissance composer William Byrd, also appropriate for the Feast of Corpus Christi in Roman Catholic liturgical use. It was published in Byrd's *Gradualia* in 1605.

Gregorio Allegri (1582 – 1652) was an Italian composer, priest and singer who was born and died in Rome. His musical career began early on as a boy singer, from which his dedication to the Roman Catholic Church and its sacred music would continue to his death. Allegri composed a large body of masses and motets for the Roman Liturgy, which caught the attention of Pope Urban VIII who appointed him to the Sistine Chapel Choir in 1629, with which he was associated for the rest of his life. By far the most well known and regarded piece of music composed by Allegri is the

Miserere mei, Deus, a setting of the penitential Psalm 51. It is written for two choirs, one of five voices and the other of four, usually spaced apart within the Sistine Chapel to produce an antiphonal, or echo, effect.

The *Miserere* is one of the most often-performed examples of late Renaissance music, although it was written during the usually defined years of the Baroque period; in this regard it is representative of the music of the Roman School of composers, who were stylistically conservative. The work acquired a considerable reputation for mystery and inaccessibility between the time of its composition and the 20th Century. Folklore has it that the Vatican, wanting to preserve its aura of mystery, forbade copies, threatening any publication or attempted copy with excommunication. They were not prepared, however, for a special visit in 1770 from a 14-year-old Wunderkind, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. On a trip to Rome with his father, as the story goes, young Mozart heard the work in the Sistine Chapel and afterwards was able to transcribe the entire composition from his photographic memory! It is reassuring to know that for his indiscretion, Mozart was not excommunicated by the Church.

The chorale-hymn *Jesu, meine Freude* (Jesus My Joy) was written by German Baroque composer Johann Crüger, c. 1650, and later became the basis of several works by Johann Sebastian Bach, including the *Funeral Motet*, BWV 227, and this *Choral Prelude*, BWV 610, from his *Orgelbüchlein*.

The first stanza of the motet sets the theme of love of Jesus and the desire to be united with him, who is named the Lamb, as in Revelation 5:6, and Bridegroom, as in Revelation 22:17. The second stanza describes the protection of Jesus against threats by Satan, enemies, thunder, hell and sin, all pictured in striking musical imagery. The third stanza repeats three times *Trotz* (defiance), facing the enemies "old dragon" (alter Drachen), death (Tod), and fear (Furcht). The fourth stanza turns away from worldly treasures and honors, which should not separate the believer from Jesus. The fifth stanza repeats four times "Good night" – to existence in the world, to sins, to pride and pomp, and to a life of vice. The last stanza imagines the entry of Jesus as the *Freudenmeister* (master of joys), as a comforter in every misery. The theme of turning away from the world to Jesus made the hymn suitable for funerals, seen as the ultimate turning away from the world.

This theme is continued in Bach's *Chorale Prelude, O Mensch bewein' dein' Sünde groß*, BWV 622, also from the *Orgelbüchlein*. The original melody by Matthäus Greiter dates from c. 1524, with a text by Sebald Heyden which urged the penitent to remember and "deplore your great sin." Bach used this in several compositions, including the large-scale choral fantasy that closes Part One of the *St Matthew Passion*.

Canticum Calamitatis Maritimae ("Song of Maritime Calamity") is an eight-part a cappella choral composition by the Finnish composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi. Written in 1997, the piece was inspired by the MS Estonia disaster of 1994. Nowhere is longing for understanding more present than in the face of untimely death, thus this work strives to come to terms with the horrific 1994 ferry accident in the Baltic Sea which killed 910 passengers. After a brief, whispered introduction, the solo soprano sings an emotional, wordless melody juxtaposed with the baritone's straightforward, unemotional account of the facts of the disaster. The chorus elaborates with powerful, descriptive passages from Psalm 107. Text-painting in music permeates the work – it is used to depict the crashing waves, the terrifying cacophony and confusion during the event, and the departure of souls as, one by one, they take their last breath. The piece concludes as it began, with excerpts from the *Requiem Mass*, expressing hope for eternal light and peace for those who lost their lives.

The Moores School Concert Chorale, University of Houston presents

Cathedral Voices: Sacred Masterworks for Chorus

in the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston

Frank Martin Mass for Double Choir, a cappella

1 Kyrie

2 Gloria

3 Credo

4 Charles Tournemire Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu,
from L'Orgue mystique, op.58 no. 27

5 Martin, continued Sanctus et Benedictus

6 Agnus Dei

7 William Byrd Motet, Ave verum corpus

8 Gregorio Allegri Miserere mei, Deus (Psalm 51)

9 J. S. Bach Prelude, Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 610
Motet, Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 227

10 Jesu, meine Freude

11 Es ist nun Nichts

12 Unter deinen Schirmen

13 Denn das Gesetz

14 Trotz dem alten Drachen

15 Ihr aber seid nicht fleischlich

16 Weg mit allen Schätzen

17 So aber Christus in euch ist

18 Gute Nacht, o Wesen

19 So nun der Geist

20 Weicht, ihr Trauergeister

21 Prelude, O Mensch

bewein dein' Sünde groß, BWV 622

22 Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

CanticCalamitatis Maritimaeum

Recorded in 24bit/96khz 5.0 channel surround sound in the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston

Produced and Engineered by John Proffitt

Sale of this recording benefits the Moores School Concert Chorale



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